PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

DATE: MAY 8, 2007

CASE NO.: ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT 2006-578
GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT 2006-109
ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT 2006-086

APPLICANT: CITY OF LA QUINTA

REQUEST: CONSIDERATION OF A NEGATIVE DECLARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT AND ZONE TEXT AMENDMENT TO ESTABLISH POLICIES AND STANDARDS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TENTATIVE TRACT MAPS ON PARCELS OF TEN ACRES OR LESS IN THE SOUTHEASTERN PORTION OF THE CITY

LOCATION: SOUTHEAST PORTION OF THE CITY, SOUTH OF AVENUE 52

PROPERTY OWNER: NOT APPLICABLE

GENERAL PLAN/ ZONING DESIGNATIONS: VARIES; LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL AND VERY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA). THE LA QUINTA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT COMPLETED ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT 2006-578. BASED ON THIS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED THAT THE PROPOSED PROJECT COULD NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT. A NEGATIVE DECLARATION IS PROPOSED.

SURROUNDING LAND USES: GENERALLY, THIS AREA OF THE CITY IS DEVELOPED IN SINGLE-FAMILY TRACTS AND COUNTRY CLUB DEVELOPMENTS OF VARYING SIZES

BACKGROUND:

A majority of the recent single-family development proposed in the southern section of La Quinta have been primarily small projects on "infill lots." These subdivisions have maximized density often at the cost of better circulation and access, overall design, open space and recreational amenities. A limited number of undeveloped or unentitled parcels remain in the southeastern section of the City with most being ten acres or less (Attachment 1). The general boundary for this area is south of Avenue 52 and generally west of Monroe Street.

The item was discussed both at a joint City Council/Planning Commission meeting in 2006, and at the June 6, 2006 City Council meeting (Attachment 2). At that time, Council directed staff to develop policies and standards that addresses the subdivision of property that is 10 acres or less. In response to this, staff has developed amendments to the General Plan and Zoning Code which would provide clear direction for the development of these smaller parcels that ultimately either results in the creation of larger lots or consolidation of properties to an acreage size that can lead to a better design and the inclusion of amenities and/or open space.

The public hearing for this item was opened at the April 24 Planning Commission and, at the request of staff, was continued to the May 8 meeting in order to allow staff additional time to further consider the proposed amendment language and expand notification to include all property owners of parcels ten acres or less located within the subject area.

PROPOSAL:

The proposed text amendments will consist of two components; a General Plan amendment and a Zone Change. Both proposals are as follows:

General Plan Amendment

First, a General Plan Text Amendment which will add the following to the General Plan:

> Residential Goals, Policies, and Programs (Page 20 of the General Plan): Add under Policy 2:
>
> *Program 2.2*: The City shall establish development standards that ensure small residential development projects (less than 10 acres in size) include land use patterns, infrastructure, amenities and features consistent with larger projects.

Program 2.3: On lands south of Avenue 52 within the City's limits, consider the possibility of reducing density and/or increasing lot sizes on development projects less than 10 acres in size in an effort to encourage compatible development with the more rural lands east of the City.

Zone Change

In order to implement the new Programs 2.2 and 2.3, the following text amendments would be required to the Zoning Ordinance.

Section 9.30.030 would be ***amended*** to read:

9.30.030 RL Low Density Residential District.

A. Purpose. To provide for the development and preservation of low density neighborhoods (two to four units per acre) with one- and two-story single-family detached dwellings on large or medium size lots and/or, subject to a specific plan, projects with clustered smaller dwellings, such as one- and two-story single-family attached, townhome or condominium dwellings, with generous open space.

B. Permitted Uses. Chapter 9.40 lists permitted land uses.

C. Development Standards.

Minimum lot size	7200 sq. ft. [1]
Minimum lot frontage	60 ft.
Maximum structure height	28 ft.
Maximum number of stories	2
Minimum front yard setback (non-garage portions of dwelling)	20 ft.[2]
Minimum garage setback	25 ft.[3]
Minimum interior/exterior side yard setbacks	5/10 ft.[4]
Minimum rear yard setback	10 ft. for existing recorded lots and 25 ft. for new lots
Maximum lot coverage	50%
Minimum livable floor area excluding garage	1400 sq. ft.
Minimum landscape setbacks adjacent to perimeter streets	10' minimum at any point, 20' minimum average over entire frontage

[1] ***A minimum lot size of 20,000 sq. ft. or larger shall be required of new lots created within subdivisions 10 acres or less in size as further described in Section 9.50.100.***

[2] Projects with five or more adjacent dwelling units facing the same street shall incorporate front setbacks varying between 20 feet and 25 feet plus in order to avoid streetscape monotony.

[3] Twenty feet if "roll-up" type garage door is used.

[4] For interior setbacks, if the building is over 17 feet in height, the setback is five feet plus one foot for every foot over 17 feet in height or fraction thereof, to a maximum setback of ten feet. The additional setback may be provided entirely at grade level or a combination of at grade and airspace above the 17-foot building.

Section 9.50.100 would be **added** and read as follows:

9.50.100.1 RL district property subdivision development standards, ten acres or less, located south of Avenue 52, and shall be designated on the Official Zoning Map as "Southeast Policy Area Overlay."

A. Applicability. The following development standards shall apply to all subdivisions 10 acres or less in size located in the RL district, south of Avenue 52, and west of Monroe Street.

B. Development Standards.

1. A minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet shall be required, unless:

a. The proposed subdivision establishes a minimum of 25% common area open space (exclusive of individual residential lots). Said open space shall include amenities and features such as passive open space, trails, play areas or equipment, picnic facilities, recreational amenities, clubhouse facilities and/or active use parks. Retention basins may be considered as part of the 25% open space requirement provided they are designed as an integral part of the project, fully landscaped, and accessible for passive and/or active use; and

b. The minimum lot size and lot width within the proposed subdivision should be equal to or greater than the minimum lot size and lot width of the residential lots within the abutting subdivided properties created prior to _____(effective date of ordinance); and

c. Driveway access should be consolidated with other neighboring undeveloped properties.

2. Under no circumstances shall lots be less than 7,200 square feet in size.

3. A landscaped parkway of 30 feet in depth shall be required on all public streets.

4. All other development standards of the RL District, including, but not limited to setbacks, building height and parking requirements, shall apply.

C. Official Zoning Map. The City's Official Zoning Map shall identify as an overlay all properties potentially affected by these provisions.

<u>ANALYSIS:</u>

The General Plan includes the following Goals, Policies and Programs that are directly applicable to the proposed amendments:

- **General Land Use Goals, Policies & Programs (Page 19)**

  GOAL 2: High quality development which promotes the City's image as "The Gem of the Desert"

  Program 2.2: The Development Code shall include design standards in all zoning districts which assure high quality development.

- **Residential Goals, Policies, and Programs (Page 20)**

  GOAL 2: A broad range of housing types and choices for all residents of the City.

  Policy 1 – The City shall encourage the preservation of neighborhood character and assure a consistent and compatible residential land use pattern.

  Program 1.2: Apply the City's discretionary powers and site development review process consistently to assure that subdivision and development plans are compatible with existing residential areas.

  Policy 2 – Encourage compatible development adjacent to existing neighborhoods and infrastructure.

  Policy 3 – The City shall discourage scattered development of residential subdivisions by requiring necessary improvement/extension of intervening roadways and infrastructure to serve new developments.

The intent of the General Plan was clearly to encourage the development of high quality residential projects within the City. As larger parcels have been developed, it has been easier to implement good design, because the larger parcels have enough room to accommodate open space areas, setbacks and single access points. As often happens, the remaining parcels in this area are smaller, and often are long and narrow, making their development more complicated. Of particular concern is the need to provide access to multiple lots created from a two and a half, five or ten acre parcel. As the Planning Commission may recall, these parcels often propose single cul-de-sac streets which significantly impact the amount of land available for lots, open space and landscaping. If two of these parcels, for example, were to share an access cul-de-sac, both parcels would have more room to include open space areas, parkways and other features.

The proposed amendments will create development standards which will provide for open space and amenities within projects as well as provide added landscaping on the major roadways on which these smaller lots are located. These provisions may also encourage neighboring property owners to consolidate their development efforts. The proposed amendments, therefore, are consistent with the General Plan's Goals and Policies supporting high quality development.

Public Notice

This request was published in the Desert Sun newspaper on April 12, 2007, and mailed to all affected property owners and occupants within 500 feet of the project site as required by Section 9.200.110 of the Zoning Code. To date, no letters have been received.

STATEMENT OF MANDATORY FINDINGS:

Findings to recommend approval of this request can be made and are contained in the attached Resolutions.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Adopt Planning Commission Resolution 2007-____, recommending a Negative Declaration of environmental impact be adopted for Environmental Assessment 2006-578 to the City Council.

2. Adopt Planning Commission Resolution 2007-____, recommending to the City Council approval of General Plan Amendment 2006-109.

3. Adopt Planning Commission Resolution 2007-____, recommending to the City Council approval of Zone Change 2006-086.

Attachments:

1. Area Map – Properties Unentitled ≤ 10 acres
2. June 6, 2006 City Council Report and Meeting Minutes

Prepared by:

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Les Johnson
Planning Manager